



Using, Storing and Preserving Asparagus

Prepared by:
Lisa Treiber, MSU Extension educator

Michigan-grown asparagus is available between May and June.

Recommended varieties

Use rust-resistant strains such as Mary Washington and Waltham Washington for fresh use, freezing and canning. Broch's Imperial and Paradise varieties are best served fresh.

Storage and food safety

- Keep asparagus in the refrigerator away from meat, poultry and seafood products.
- Wash hands before and after handling fresh produce.
- Wash asparagus using cool running water. Do not use soap.
- Use a separate cutting board for vegetables; cut away any damaged or bruised areas.
- Store processed canned products in a cool, dry area.
- Keep produce away from raw meats and meat juice to prevent cross contamination.
- For best quality and nutritive value, preserve only what your family can consume in 12 months.

Yield

1 pound (snapped)	=	2 cups cut up
1 to 1 1/2 pounds fresh	=	1 pint frozen
2 1/2 to 4 pounds fresh	=	1 quart canned
10-pound box	=	7 to 10 pints frozen
24 1/2 pounds	=	a canner load of 7 quarts
16 pounds	=	a canner load of 9 pints
1 crate (31 pounds)	=	7 to 12 quarts canned (average 3 1/2 pounds per quart)
1 bushel (45 pounds)	=	30 to 45 pints frozen or 11 to 18 quarts canned



How to preserve

Freezing

Frozen asparagus retains both color and flavor better than canned asparagus. Select young, tender stalks with compact tips. Wash thoroughly and sort according to thickness of stalk. Cut off and discard any tough portions of stalks. Leave spears in lengths to fit the package or cut into 2-inch lengths. Blanch in boiling water, 2 minutes for small spears and 2-inch asparagus lengths, 3 minutes for medium spears and 4 minutes for large spears. Cool promptly in ice

water for the same length of time you blanched the asparagus. Change water as it becomes discolored or begins to warm up.

Pack into airtight freezer containers or bag, leaving no headspace. When packing spears, alternate tips and stem ends. In containers that are wider at the top than at the bottom, pack asparagus with tips down. Seal, label, date and freeze the product. Alternatively, freeze individual spears on a cookie sheet or tray. When frozen, pack spears in freezer containers or bags and remove as much air as possible. Seal, label, date and freeze the product. Freeze no more than 2 pounds of food per cubic foot of freezer capacity per day. One cubic foot will hold 7.4 gallons.

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Canning

Pressure canning is the only safe method for canning asparagus due to its low acid content.

Select young, tender, tight-tipped spears, 4 to 6 inches long. Wash asparagus and trim off tough scales. Break off tough stems and wash again. Leave asparagus in spears or cut into 1-inch pieces.

• **Raw pack method:** Pack raw asparagus into jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. If desired, add 1/2 teaspoon salt per pint, 1 teaspoon salt per quart. Fill jars to within 1 inch of the top with boiling water. Remove air bubbles. Adjust lids and process. Process in a dial-gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a weighted-gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure: pints for 30 minutes or quarts for 40 minutes.

• **Hot pack method:** Cover asparagus with boiling water. Boil 2 or 3 minutes. Pack hot into hot jars, leaving 1-inch headspace. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt to pints, 1 teaspoon to quarts, if desired. Fill jar to 1 inch from top with boiling hot cooking liquid or water. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process in a dial-gauge pressure canner at 11 pounds pressure or in a weighted-gauge pressure canner at 10 pounds pressure: pints for 30 minutes or quarts for 40 minutes.

References

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. (2006). *So easy to preserve* (5th ed.). Athens, GA: Author. Retrieved from <http://setp.uga.edu/>

Revised by Lisa Treiber, Food Safety Extension Educator

Recommended process time for asparagus in a dial-gauge pressure canner

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 2,000 ft	2,001 - 4,000 ft	4,001 - 6,000 ft	6,001 - 8,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	30 min	11 lb	12 lb	13 lb	14 lb
	Quarts	40	11	12	13	14

Recommended process time for asparagus in a weighted-gauge pressure canner

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of	
Style of Pack	Jar Size	Process Time	0 - 1,000 ft	Above 1,000 ft
Hot and raw	Pints	30 min	10 lb	15 lb
	Quarts	40	10	15

This document was adapted with permission from the *Complete Guide to Home Canning*, Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, USDA, revised 2009.

This bulletin replaces WO1046 Food Preservation Series – Asparagus (Michigan State University Extension, 2006).

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